

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS FOR PROMOTING VOCABULARY LEARNING AMONG TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper attempts to explore the advantages of using posters in fostering vocabulary as a self-directed learning tool among professional students at the tertiary level. A poster is a printed or manually designed paper/chart/flexi used for presenting a topic/concept/vocabulary item to the audience in an effective manner. As part of the study, the students prepared various posters of different sizes those consist of vocabulary items, grammar topics explained in an interesting manner providing various aspects such as definition, benefits, advantages, techniques and examples. The rationale of posters is to grab the attention of the teacher and their peers. These posters perform as teaching tools for developing language skills especially vocabulary among the students. It can be pasted on the classroom walls that explain a specific educational topic that makes them learn the topic effectively and effortlessly. They are content-based mainly focusing on the theme such as in ESL context, learning simple present, synonyms, idioms, one-word substitutes so on so forth. The sample of the present study was third-year undergraduate students of pharmacy who were studying in their second semester for the academic year 2017-18. Eighty participants took part in the experimental study. The students' questionnaires administered and poster presentations were made by the students on different topics in their classroom. It was found that poster presentations are beneficial for developing vocabulary knowledge and enhancing interest in learning vocabulary. It was suggested that there are some issues to be addressed for maximizing the benefits of using posters in the ESL context. It boosted students' morale and develop their language skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** Poster, Poster Presentation, Vocabulary, Vocabulary Learning & Learning Tools

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### INTRODUCTION

The various recent developments in the fields of Science and Technology and other major fields have increased the demands of the English language in the higher education and in the job market. In learning a language, every learner has to master various skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. The basic foundation of all these language skills, the vocabulary is a very essential skill. In order to get command over the language, one must possess the knowledge of good vocabulary. It is observed that many language learners have difficulties and challenges due to inadequate knowledge of diction in their field of study. Vocabulary has a great significance in learning a language among the learners (Hatch & Brown, 1995). By adopting communicative teaching strategies that encourage to exchange of ideas among the learners through interaction in the form of pair/group work for developing vocabulary at the tertiary level can promote active language learning.

In order to develop students' vocabulary skills, poster presentations are introduced for communication with an audience other than their classmates. These are considered to be an effective learning tool used for the enhancement of vocabulary in the language learning context.

The present study would be significant because it provides implications to the students and teachers in using poster presentation in the classroom for the development of language in general and vocabulary learning in particular.

### **Aim**

The aim of the study is to investigate the benefits of using posters in the classroom and how it facilitates learning among the students to apply their theoretical knowledge into practice. In the end, it also attempts to ensure how effective posters are in the classroom for language development.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the subsequent research questions

- Can the posters facilitate vocabulary learning among the students?
- What are the students' perceptions about using poster presentation in the language classroom?

It is hypothesized that the poster presentation would develop students' vocabulary skills. It is also anticipated that there would be positive feedback about the usefulness of poster presentation from the students in the classroom. The positive impact will show that poster presentation improve students overall performance in language skills. Therefore, the study was conducted to verify the hypotheses.

### **Vocabulary**

Hornby (1995) claims that vocabulary is the total number of words present in a language. One cannot use a language without the knowledge of the words of that language. Without grammar very little can be conveyed...but without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed (Wilkins, 2000, p.111). Hence vocabulary development is regarded as a very essential realm to master in learning a new language. In a second language learning context, one needs to learn vocabulary very systematically. As language is made up of words, the mastering of the vocabulary is also must. Words are considered as building blocks of language (Throat et. al, 2001). Knowledge of vocabulary is essential for expressing one's thoughts and feelings. Undoubtedly, vocabulary encourages the use of language structure and functions that promote communication (Nunan, 1991). According to Hedge (2000), vocabulary plays an important role in learning any foreign language. Strong knowledge of vocabulary assists learners to increase their diction in that language.

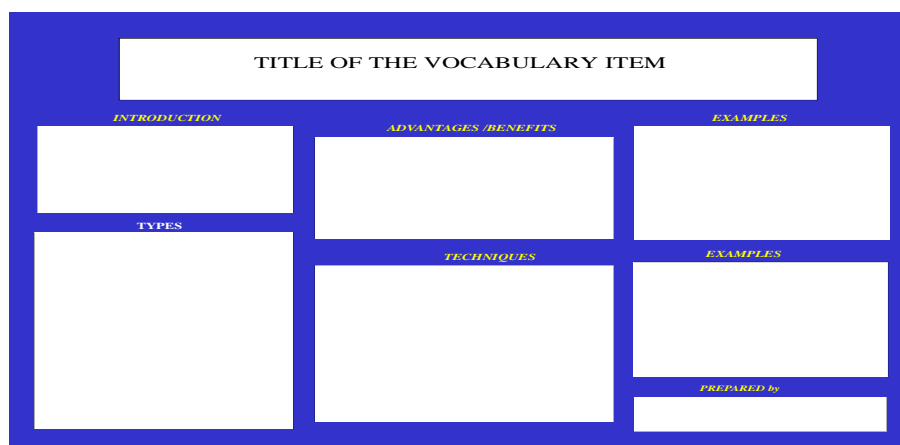
Words taught in isolation cannot be retained. Hence, vocabulary should be taught in context. It can be taught using various techniques to make language learning interesting. For seizing the attention of the learners, poster presentations are one of such techniques that can be used for developing one's vocabulary knowledge.

### **Poster**

The poster presentation is first introduced in scientific conferences around the 1970s and since then they have proved to be a famous mode of exhibiting information at seminars and conferences (Gosling, 1999). According to Osa & Musser (2004) posters are seen as a neglected type of instructional material for decades. For the past few years, the posters are made mandatory in many academic programmes, conferences and seminars. Stoss (1996) states that a poster

presentation is a dynamic communication tool for the evaluation of the students' research and their presentation for the past four decades. It is categorized as one of the most effective and interesting visual aids in learning-teaching context.

Posters, learning/education tools enable visualization in the classroom for fostering students' vocabulary learning. Posters provide an opportunity for visual learning with textbook reading, lecture and traditional homework assignments. According to Miller (2007) poster is a hybrid form – more detailed than a speech but less than a paper, more interactive than the two. Posters are often prepared by students to present their project or for poster presentation to display visually an important course, topic or theme in a particular perspective for a specific audience to consider.



**Figure 1: General Template for Poster Presentation**

Poster presentation in the classroom is another way of engaging the students actively in their own learning processes and it also helps teachers to employ their time efficiently. They not only enhance the performance of students but also modify students' attitudes towards the subject in a positive way. Posters are colourful, attractive learning tools that enrich the learning context (Osa & Musser, 2004). The general poster template with different categories is given in figure 1, for the students to pertain a poster presentation in the classroom.

A good poster must have the following features

- Simplicity: the message should be understood easily and effectively.
- Brevity: the minimum words should be presented effectively.
- Appropriateness: the theme and subject matter should correspond.
- Attractiveness: it should capture the attention of the audience.
- Design and colour: it should have an appropriate size, design and colour.

Advantages of poster presentation

- The poster is a visual aid used in the learning process.
- It is an effective medium for developing communication skills (Berry & Houston, 1995).
- It helps students to learn the topic thoroughly.
- It is an effective way to grab students' attention and maintain their interest in the subject concerned.

- Posters motivate students to learn a particular topic and provide a chance for peer learning (Berry & Houston, 1995).
- They help students absorb the content faster and promote a positive attitude among the students.
- The learners involve in peer discussion, enjoy and engage in activity

### **Difficulties of Poster Presentation**

In the implementation of the poster presentation, some challenges are involved. The teacher and the students often encounter some difficulties during the poster presentations. Time constraints are regarded as an important challenge to the students while preparing a poster. They spent a lot of time in selecting and designing a poster. Another difficulty is that the students came across the use of L1 interaction in their discussion instead of the target language in their communication. Another problem is that the teachers are likely to get the domination of some students over other students in the group and ultimately it hinders learners' language development.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Learning vocabulary is a hugely challenging task in the process of second language learning context. Many researchers claimed that the use of posters in language learning has been widely recognized, and a number of poster presentation strategies employed for developing vocabulary.

Zerin and Khan (2013) in their study, presented the use of posters for the developing speaking skills among the students and how it promoted the development of vocabulary. This study also discussed about the development of students' presentation skills and how they overcame shyness while making poster presentations. In the end, the study found that there was a positive impact on students' performance in terms of motivation, self-confidence and collaborative work.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) study revealed that the presence of posters is beneficial for the students' overall language development. They also claimed that the posters would develop target language structures or vocabulary among the students without a teacher's instruction. It also incorporated the language skills among the learners.

In another study, Koshy (2011) used poster presentations as an assessment tool in the large classes for teaching speaking skills. The study was concluded that with help of poster presentations, the students' performance in presentation skills were developed effectively.

In the above studies, the researchers focused on developing various language skills with the help of poster presentations. However, the researcher in this study, concentrated on enhancing vocabulary among tertiary learners using poster presentations.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed method approach was used in the study for exploring the participants' experiences and perceptions about making a poster presentation.

#### **Sample**

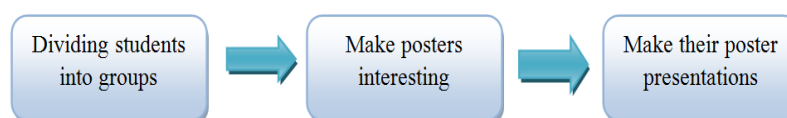
A total of 80 third year B. Pharmacy students, 58 females and 22 males, participated from a professional college that is affiliated to JNTUH. There were 40 students in each of the two sections. The age of the participants was between 20

and 21. They were from an English medium background.

### **Procedure**

The study was conducted in the second semester in their third year of graduation without any prior information. The data was collected using two research tools 1) students' questionnaires and 2) observation of the students' poster presentations.

Initially, the researchers divided the students into groups/pairs depending upon the vocabulary items. Poster presentations on various vocabulary items are allotted to the student for making an interesting poster presentation to be used in the classroom instruction. The researcher provided the necessary instruction and guidance during the preparation and presentation of their posters. Students present their posters in the classroom effectively in order to complete their task.



**Figure 2: Research Procedure of Poster Presentation**

Later eighty students' questionnaires were administered for obtaining the information about their attitudes and perceptions of using posters for making presentations. The researchers analysed and interpreted the poster presentations of the students for comprehending the challenges and difficulties.

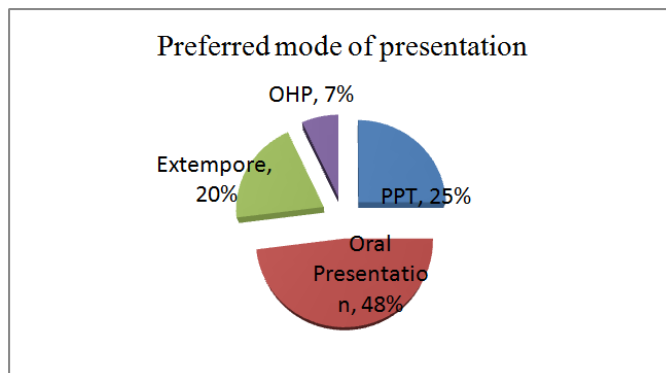
### **RESULTS/FINDINGS**

The collected data from the student's questionnaire and poster presentations by the students are analysed. The following are the findings of the study.

The findings indicated that the presentation through poster was a good learning experience to the students. The findings of the current study are presented in various themes.

The results revealed that the majority of the participants (i. e. 88% of them) had experience in poster making, whereas 25% of the learners had experience in a poster presentation. It indicated that most of them know how to make a poster but they were not aware of presenting a poster.

- Which mode of presentation do you prefer to use in the classroom?
  - Oral presentation
  - Powerpoint presentation (PPT)
  - Over Head Projector (OHP)
  - Extempore
  - If any other please specify



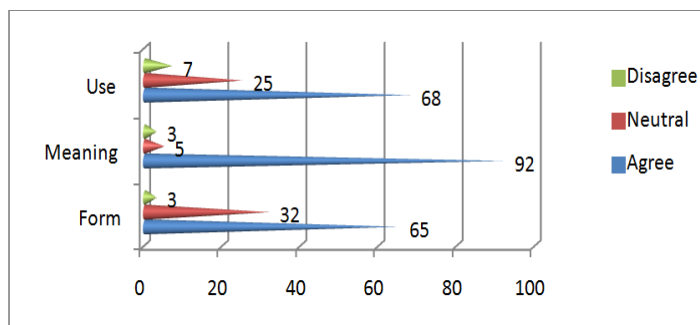
**Figure 3: Preferred Mode of Presentation According to the Students**

The figure 3 reveals that majority of the students (i. e. 48%) employ oral presentations in their classroom, whereas 25% of them prefer ppt presentations in the classroom. 20% of the participants preferred to use extempore in the classroom and only 7% of them make a presentation through an overhead projector. It is found that the majority of the classroom presentations are done using ppts. The learners assumed that ppt presentations involve very little efforts and work, but it helps students in developing oral skills at the tertiary level.

- Which components of a word does your teacher focus while teaching vocabulary in the language classroom?  
(Tick in the appropriate box/es)

**Table 1**

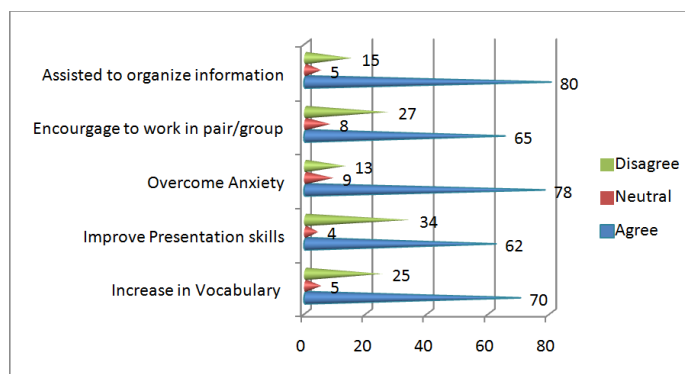
| S No | Writing components                | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| 1.   | Usage of the word in the context  |       |         |          |
| 2.   | Meaning of the word               |       |         |          |
| 3.   | Form (spelling and pronunciation) |       |         |          |



**Figure 4: Components of a Word (Adapted from Nation (2001, p.27))**

The figure 4 displays that whenever the students come across to a new word, the majority of them (i. e. 92% of participants) refer dictionary to know the meaning of the word, whereas 68% of them attempted to know the usage of that word and 65% of them focused on the form such as spelling and pronunciation of the word. The analysis and interpretation of the data presents that with the use of poster presentation, the students learned all the three aspects of vocabulary in detail with various examples for effective use in their day to day lives.

### Advantages of Poster Presentations



**Figure 5: Advantages of using Posters**

The figure 5 shows that the benefits of using posters in the classroom. Majority of the students (i. e. 70%) agreed that it assisted them in increasing their vocabulary, whereas 25% of them disagreed that the posters did not help them to increase vocabulary.

Majority of the participants (i. e. 62%) accepted that the use of posters improved their presentation skills, whereas 34% of them disagreed that the posters did not improve their presentation skills.

Majority of the participants (i. e. 78%) reported that posters assisted them to overcome anxiety, but 13% of them mentioned that it did not help to overcome anxiety levels.

65% of the students reported that poster presentations facilitated and encouraged to work in pairs/groups, whereas 27% of them stated that the posters did not encourage them.

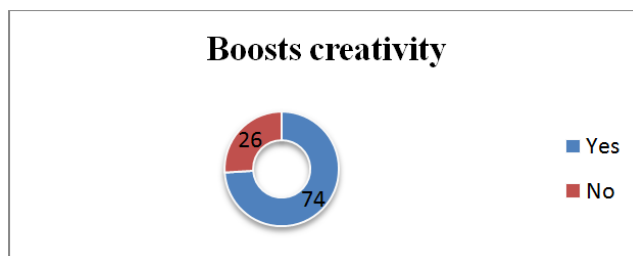
Majority of the participants (i. e. 80%) stated that the poster presentations helped them to organize the information in a concise manner for effective use where as 15% of them disagreed that they did not help to organize the information. It is the process where students get the adequate information, and then they filter it based on the topic and present their organized ideas through the poster.



**Figure 6: Poster presentation Develops Students' Self-Confidence**

82% of the participants believed that poster presentations assisted them to develop their self-confidence whereas 18% of them stated that they did not help to develop their confidence. Most of the participants felt that their anxiety levels are high when they get the thought of the presentation in the class. Initially, it was the feeling of all the participants. By interacting with the pair/group, they slowly made themselves comfortable. However, poster presentations facilitated them to overcome speaking anxiety and boost their morale. It was found that students developed their self-confidence and learnt how to apply their theoretical knowledge into practice. It has given them an opportunity to evaluate themselves honestly during the poster presentations. It was also found that the students developed team spirit /team management skills when

they worked in pairs/ teams collaboratively for completing various tasks for making a poster presentation. The students participated enthusiastically in the pair/group activity for generating a variety of thoughts and opinions for constructing and innovative ideas in preparation of the posters and its presentation.



**Figure 7: Poster Presentation Boosts Students' Creativity**

74% of the students stated that poster presentation boosts students' creativity, whereas 26% of them mentioned that the posters did not boost students' creativity. The learners get a chance to exhibit creativity through their posters. Students have a wide choice of styles to choose for grabbing the audience's attention. Most of the participants have come up with different creative ideas in making posters. It was found that most of the participants used creative and interesting posters for the presentation of various vocabulary items. For preparing posters, some students used pictures and images from different magazines, others used various sketch pens with their own handwriting.



**Figure 8: Learners' Creative Poster about the Analogy**

The figure 8 shows that the creative poster prepared by the students on the vocabulary item, analogy. The poster attracts the audience's attention and helps them to make an effective presentation. Through the poster presentations, the students get a stress-free environment (Morgan, 2012). It assists them to work collaboratively with their peer/group. In a short period of time, they learn different vocabulary items very interestingly and quickly.

### Language Skills

Not only posters assist to increase students' performance but also change the attitude of students towards the language learning in a positive manner. The students develop their language skills such as speaking skills, vocabulary skills through the posters. Poster presentation assists learners to develop a variety of language skills (Boggu & Singh, 2015) such as presentation skills and speaking skills.



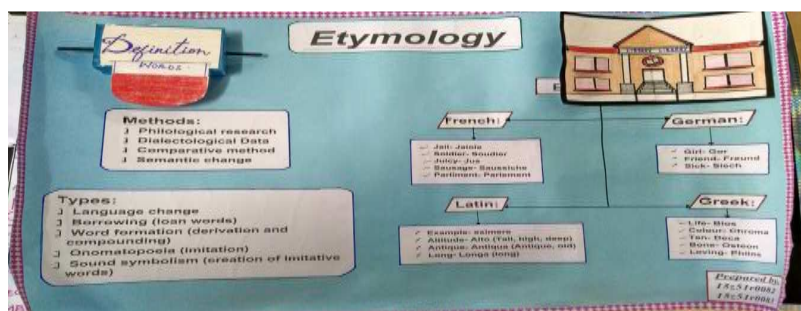


Figure 9: Learners' Poster about the Etymology

The findings of the study also offered that most of the students found working in groups was an interesting and challenging task. The participants learn interaction, asking questions and responding to questions, expressing opinions, giving opinions, making suggestions, accepting suggestions with the help of the peer group very comfortable in an amicable manner without much inhibition. The students gain knowledge of vocabulary items without much effort, when the posters were implemented in the language classroom.

Poster presentations foster learner autonomy among the participants. In addition to that, the participants learn how to use, what to use and work collaboratively with their peers. Working in groups/pairs helped participants to evaluate themselves honestly. Posters provided an opportunity for the students to practice self-directed inferential learning in vocabulary.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the present study is to explore the effects of using posters in the classroom for developing vocabulary among the tertiary level students. The hypothesis 'poster presentations develop students' vocabulary and language skills' proved to be true after the analysis and interpretation of the data. Further, vocabulary and language skills of the learners were improved with the use of posters in their presentation.

The study revealed that the use of poster presentation in the classroom promoted productive language learning among the learners. Poster presentations provided learners with a chance to prepare their posters on the given topic creatively and effectively. It can be observed that the poster presentation assisted the learners to engage more actively in learning. This learning aid as visual stimulus can draw the interest and attention of the audience as well as help the learners. These presentations facilitated the L2 vocabulary and raised motivation levels among the students. The students' enthusiasm is increased a lot through participating in this activity. The use of poster presentations in the class room may require a considerable amount of work for the learners as well as teachers. It is regarded as the best way for effective teaching in the large classes as well as for assessing the students. Teachers should provide proper guidance and facilitation in helping learners to complete their posters and carry out their presentation. It can be concluded that poster presentations assist the participants to learn various vocabulary items in a language learning context more actively. Posters also reduce the anxiety level of the participants. It also enables teachers to monitor students' performance more efficiently.

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